DOCUMENT RESUME

ED 392 716 SO 026 024

AUTHOR Loman, Sandra L.; Arnold, Frederick M.
TITLE Using the Humanities To Illustrate and Develop Leadership Concepts.
PUB DATE Nov 95
NOTE 9p.
PUB TYPE Reports - Descriptive (141)

EDRS PRICE MF01 Plus Postage. PC Not Available from EDRS.
DESCRIPTORS Business Responsibility; *Community Education; *Community Leaders; *Humanities; *Leadership; *Leadership Qualities; Leadership Responsibility; Leadership Styles; Leadership Training; *Literature; Supervisory Methods; Technical Institutes; Two Year Colleges
IDENTIFIERS Madison Area Technical College WI

ABSTRACT

This paper describes a course, Leadership as an Art, developed at the Madison Area Technical College (Wisconsin). The course is taught by pairs of instructors and is offered for college transfer credit in the humanities. It focuses on using the humanities to examine the various dimensions of leadership skills and their development. Students search the literature for specific tools intended for concrete purposes and immediate application. The objective is to model goal setting, vision articulation, teamwork, ethical frameworks, communication techniques, conflict resolution, and other aspects of the leadership function as students develop and refine their own leadership styles and abilities. Specific examples from literature are included. The assumption is that there can be value in using literature (Melville) to explore the leadership function without explicitly "teaching" "Moby Dick" or "Billy Budd"; and that the student will come away both intrigued with the literature and with a better understanding of essential leadership tools. (EH)

****
* Reproductions supplied by EDRS are the best that can be made *
* from the original document. *
****

ED 392 716

USING THE HUMANITIES TO ILLUSTRATE AND DEVELOP LEADERSHIP CONCEPTS

U.S. DEPARTMENT OF EDUCATION
Office of Educational Research and Improvement
EDUCATIONAL RESOURCES INFORMATION CENTER (ERIC)

X This document has been reproduced as received from the person or organization originating it.

☐ Minor changes have been made to improve reproduction quality.

• Points of view or opinions stated in this document do not necessarily represent official OERI position or policy.

PERMISSION TO REPRODUCE THIS MATERIAL IN **OTHER THAN PAPER COPY** HAS BEEN GRANTED BY

Frederick Arnold

TO THE EDUCATIONAL RESOURCES INFORMATION CENTER (ERIC)

Sandra L. Loman
Frederick M. Arnold

BEST COPY AVAILABLE

Preface

Classic works, from the ancient Greek texts to the product of more contemporary authors, most often find their place in the two year college curriculum through standard history and literature courses. The platform for content presentation is routinely academic. Plot, theme, character development, literary devices, lessons of history and comparative analysis often dominate both student and instructor effort. Immediate, practical and pragmatic considerations receive scant consideration.

The focus is shifted dramatically when the classroom theme is fixed on the various dimensions of leadership skills and their development. Students in this setting will search the literature for specific tools intended for concrete purposes and immediate application. Here the objective is to model goal setting, vision articulation, teamwork, ethical frameworks, communication techniques, conflict resolution, and other aspects of the leadership function as students develop and refine their own leadership styles and abilities.

INTRODUCTION

We offer a course in leadership, Leadership as an Art, developed by Phi Theta Kappa through a Kellogg grant. It is designed for two year colleges and several hundred community college faculty members have been trained and certified to teach this course in the past three years. We have six faculty members currently certified, each from a different discipline, including History, Economics, Marketing, Psychology, English and Political Science. The course is team taught by pairs of instructors and is offered for college transfer credit in the humanities, hence the title, Leadership as an Art. The overhead transparency/handout provides a quick and dirty view of the humanities sources we use as part of the packaged material from Phi Theta Kappa. In addition we supplement with materials we have chosen, e.g. the film clips from Zola's *Germinal*.

We believe this course works well using humanities sources in a different way, focusing on a topic, leadership, and using the sources to illustrate or reveal concepts associated with leadership and its practice. This allows us to blend an academic emphasis with practical application because the focus is not on traditional literary analysis, for example, but rather on discovery of examples of universal human behaviors embedded in humanities materials. The humanities sources we use provide rich illustrations of the behaviors and concepts associated with leadership and they stimulate truly amazing discussion in class. Further, we have the satisfaction of introducing students to elements of their culture unknown to them and which some are unlikely to seek out independently . We like the interdisciplinary flavor of the course in that it draws from several disciplines, literature, film, psychology, leadership studies and allows each of us to draw examples from our own disciplines as well. Exploring the humanities in this fashion seems to stimulate both students and faculty in the course to examine academic materials with a new energy and to think about their experiences at work, in school, in families, and in the community in new and different ways.

The impetus for the course stems from a new use for the community college as well. This course assumes that leadership involves skills that can be discovered and developed and that community college students are a fertile source of future leaders in need of some leadership development. By exposing our students to leadership concepts and providing opportunities to practice leadership skills we broaden the base of potential leaders for our communities and help students develop a wider knowledge of themselves and their abilities. And we do this using materials which have a strong humanities foundation. The value of the humanities materials lies in the flexibility and scope of examples they contain. These materials also avoid the pitfalls of fads, making them more universal and permanent rather than narrow and transitory in their appeal. Nor do they rely on the cookbook approach so widely found in self-help or improvement works. We hope, in the brief time we have, to reveal some of the richness of humanities materials and to identify the new and broad applications of such materials which we have discovered. We realize, however, that our presentation is superficial, only briefly touching on a few examples.

SETTING GOALS: MELVILLE'S *MOBY DICK*

View a four to six minute clip from film version of *Moby Dick:* the scene in which Ahab appears for the first time to the crew and speaks with the crew about his goals for this voyage of the Pequod. After viewing this short clip (and having read this excerpt from the novel), we focus our discussion on goal setting. Our question to students is this: What does Ahab use (from his particular bag of leadership skills) to communicate his goal and to convince the crew to share this goal, to help him achieve it. We found using the *short write* technique allows the students to gather their thoughts and better articulate them when we begin to discuss this question.

Our thoughts on the usefulness of this selection. Ahab here performs an act of leadership, and one in which he delineates goals which he must also convince the crew to share or at least to accept.

Ahab's position as leader is clearly established because he is the ship's captain and he sits atop a hierarchical and rigidly defined organizational structure in which he is accepted as an absolute authority. It is a crime to defy or rebel against his authority. Until this point in the story none of the crew has seen the captain but he is accepted as the leader of the ship, the one in charge of its affairs. His absence adds both mystery and intensity to the atmosphere on the ship and this peaks as the time for the meeting draws closer. The mystery surrounding Ahab lends an aura to his position as leader. And this is in addition to the power and authority he already possesses merely because he is the captain. Ahab understands that this is not enough and he sets out through appearance and actions during the meeting with the crew to demonstrate his mastery of a number of skills related to using goals to motivate a group. He uses symbolism and ritual to "massage" the crew into accepting and then embracing his goal of finding the white whale. The symbols and rituals speak to both the pagans and Christians aboard, to experienced sailors and men new to the sea. Ahab succeeds in focusing the attention of the crew on the goal, offering concrete rewards (the gold coin), indoctrinating the crew with his particular view and confirming all of this through ritual and ceremony (the crossed harpoons, the sharing of rum). The student-led discussion which follows the video clip and the short write manages to bring all of these ideas out and relate them to other reading about leading with goals. We believe this to be a good example of how one can use humanities materials with this topic. This particular example has helped us develop a new perspective on and appreciation of Melville, not always the easiest author to read and analyze.

BILLY BUDD

The issue under consideration here is ethical decision making and the leadership role. Specific focus is on the foundations upon which decisions are made and goes beyond such routine items as knowing the facts, analyzing the data, knowing and involving the various participants, etc. The

captain, while in a position of authority, must know that exercising authority requires leadership. As a leader, the captain's decision-making position is strengthened when grounded in a "system" which promotes a recognizable consistency, an acceptable consistency, and a rational or at least an understandable basis for the stream of decisions he is ultimately responsible for making. A beginning list of standards against which the decision maker's record might be evaluated could include the following: is the process and the result just, is it fair, does it draw on common experience, does it draw on common goals, does it enlist support, can it be applied to future situations, does it draw on common values, does it result in continuity, does it result in sharing power or the consolidation of power?

The short video excerpt from the film "Billy Budd" places Captain Vere at the center of this very circumstance. He is in a position of authority by virtue of his military rank. He must decide. In order to decide and articulate the decision he must influence and lead. And, he faces the ultimate ethical dilemma, his decision will result in a life taken or a life spared.

The exchanges among the ship's officers are rich in emotion, anguish, and perhaps duplicity. A verdict has been reached by the Drumhead Court, yet the captain presses for further deliberation. The deliberations note special circumstances and attributes surrounding the case including knowledge of Budd as an individual, pity, ethical behavior, scruples, Budd's innocence before God, appeal to a higher judge, appeal to conscience, Budd's treatment if tried in a civilian court, the search for justice, and sense of duty as private men.

Vere interjects with the accepted facts of the situation, an officer's duty, the Admiralty's Code, the known penalty, military justice, the far reaching scope of military justice, the fact of war ("it's all war" noted Seymore), his attitude toward mitigating the prescribed penalty, nearness of the enemy (the French), sworn allegiance to a military code, and the officers' role as public men.

7

Finally, Wyatt is silent to the Captain's challenge to save Budd and consequently to save them all.

The general issue for the student is to connect the leadership process and ethical standards. The story and film excerpt provide the platform for discussion by the class. The class prompt is the following: It is clear and unambiguous, Billy Budd was unjustly treated because.... This statement, in its completed form as developed by each individual, becomes the focus of a self-led class discussion. Here the instructors stand back and allow the classroom dynamic to unfold. The usual response is a prolonged and sometimes heated exchange.

SUMMARY AND CONCLUSION

The use of various texts to teach and to illustrate leadership skills assumes a need for leaders. Leaders certainly assist the social system to function acceptably, that is, to adapt, to make transitions, to transmit shared culture, to facilitate change, and to exhibit necessary stability. The leadership course assumes leadership skills can be taught and that the two-year college setting is an important point of access for the acquisition of these skills and for otherwise preparing individuals to assume leadership roles. Also fundamental, and unique, is the contention that the Humanities provide an effective vehicle for illustrating and acquiring leadership skills. Classroom methodology stresses problem solving, is highly interactive, and values group decision making over individual decision making.

Regarding the specific works, the assumption is that there can be value in using literature (Melville) to explore the leadership function without explicitly "teaching" Moby Dick or Billy Budd, and that the student will come away both intrigued with the literature and with a better understanding of essential leadership tools.

In the two examples, ships' captains are in unquestioned positions of authority. They must lead. In the scenes selected, Captain Ahab illustrates use of symbolic devices to coalesce crew objectives and goals. Captain Vere and the Drumhead Court demonstrate the struggle with ethics and values in the face of imminent battle.

Does it work? Literature can have stand alone value, provide linkages across time, and connections across cultures. Students in the Leadership classes have often been thoroughly engaged by their exposure to such works as Billy Budd and Moby Dick and quick to make applications to immediate skill development and understandings associated with the leadership function. For them, this approach does work. In addition, the faculty benefits are significant as a result of the interdisciplinary nature of the course and the opportunities for faculty interaction.

A:\LDCCHADC WP\November 17, 1995